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# The Early Movements of Anthropology and Their Folkloristic Relationships

SIMON J. BRONNER

RECENTLY many analysts in folklife and material culture research have moved closer than some of their disciplinary cousins in folklore study to cultural anthropological concerns, and conversely, an increasing number of cultural anthropologists recognize the contributions of folklife/folklore research to their methods and theories.<sup>1</sup> In a past article I outlined some relations between modern trends in anthropology and folklife/folklore;<sup>2</sup> in the following essay I explore further back in time to the early movements of anthropology and their impact on the history of folkloristic thought. 'Folkloristic' is used here in a broad sense to represent the study of human traditions and behaviours. Although 'folklife' has come to signify an orientation which stresses holistic studies of 'folk' communities or regions, this meaning has been seriously challenged by a new wave of analysts who want to base folklife study on a behavioural research foundation. For their data construction they look to paradigmatic processes; they investigate the expressive actions and products, the differential identities of individuals. 'Folk' is thus not a class or caste of people; it is not even a style or design. It is an abstraction for customary ways of doing, making, and using things that individuals have in different forms and in diverse situations. Thus the new folklife is an expanded conception that allows for behaviours of folkloristic interest in factories, in cities, and with modern technologies. Rather than assume a categorical social group, such researchers use the individual as a point of departure to examine complexes of interactional, communicative, and creative processes in the world of experience. This outgrowth parallels to a degree the movement in anthropology away from societal studies to considerations of culture as human behaviour.<sup>3</sup> These stirrings are far from being universal or uniform. But they are important to keep in mind as we look back to cultural research in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century, for recognizing our study's new branches provides a reference for discussing the roots of anthropology and folklife and the intellectual climates contributing to their growth.

## EVOLUTIONARY APPROACHES

Cultural research in the nineteenth century boasted bold, grand theories for the ultimate origin and dissemination of culture. In other fields of study a rare kind of intellectual fervour took hold during this period. Darwin's evolutionary ideas and Spencer's developmental hypotheses sparked many Victorians to pursue philosophical and anthropological questions. Evolution intrigued Victorian thinkers, for it established their civilization at the height of a cultural progression. A basic presupposition was the ultimate superiority of modern European civilization. And their interest in the empire which spread into 'savage' areas whetted their appetites for insights into exotic customs, stories, and peoples.

In anthropological and folkloristic circles, the publication of Edward B. Tylor's *Primitive Culture* (1871) presaged an upsurge of cultural research during the Victorian

period. He presented basic tenets of cultural evolution and its terminology, and he accumulated copious ethnographic data to prove his sweeping claims. Tylor's avowed purpose was to reconstruct the prehistory of civilization. He noticed similarities of customs among disparate societies in his library of works on the subject and concluded that differing humans possess a psychological unity, a universally shared mental development. Since all human groups are mentally similar, he postulated a unilinear evolutionary model. Three stages—savagery at the bottom, then barbarism, and ultimately civilization—constitute the cultural ladder that all societies climb. Societies differ, he argued, because they progress at different rates. Although falling back down the ladder is possible, it rarely occurs. Thus he explained origins of beliefs and customs found in nineteenth-century Europe by drawing parallels with 'savage' societies. Many of the customs he found had lost their original meaning, he claimed, but still continued to be practiced. Such items he termed 'survivals.' By comparing survivals among different groups in the modern world with practices of 'savage' societies, he employed the basic method of the evolutionary school, as it became known—the comparative method. Through ahistorical—that is, without regard to a specific event at a specific time and without regard to chronological sequence—comparative studies of the whole of culture, the evolutionary anthropologists hoped to find origins of their civilization.

Andrew Lang, a member of the 'Great Team' of British folklorists, became deeply influenced by Tylor's work, and consequently presented a programme for a 'Method of Folklore' in which he reiterated the concept of survivals. He expanded Tylor's scope, however, to cover the whole world. His technique consisted of comparing traditions at the highest stages of the evolutionary process with examples of similar practices among 'lesser' peoples in order to posit a connection. Lang also explained Tylor's description of similar customs all over the world by postulating polygenesis—the idea that similar conditions produce similar events. While Lang influenced numerous followers in the British Isles and abroad, such as Edward Clodd, Alfred Nutt, George Laurence Gomme, Edwin Hartland, William Crooke, Sir George Grey, and Charlotte Burne, other evolutionary works such as Sir James Frazer's discussion of magic and religion in *The Golden Bough* and Lewis Henry Morgan's examination of kinship, government, technology, and property in *Ancient Society* (1877) greatly affected the thought of the period.

Frazer replaced the usual examples of narrative used by other British 'anthropological folklorists' with vegetation rites, customs that he claimed also followed an evolutionary scheme. He also presented an evolutionary model for the development of science preceded by religion, which was in turn preceded by magic. He argued that magic operates on the idea of sympathy between objects. Homeopathic (defined as like affecting like) and contagious (defined as objects once in contact continuing to have influence) magic compose two subdivisions of sympathetic magic. Magic's use in controlling the environment led, he argued, to religion's propitiatory characteristics, and finally to science's control over the environment by rational laws. Such pronouncements addressed a major human concern during the Victorian period: the acute effects of science, industrialization, and technology on traditional ways of life and landscapes. Frazer used the evolutionary scheme to mollify uncertainties over the march of science, for he asserted that this was a natural progression from savagery to civilization. Yet today folklorists realize that modernity reinforces magic and belief, for people typically possess ambivalences towards science and technology as well as older ways of life.<sup>4</sup>

Lewis Henry Morgan developed a detailed chart of the savagery, barbarism, civilization model with additional categories of lower, middle, and later periods for each stage. He outlined methods of man's rise up the various levels through the invention of more efficient methods of production. He believed that 'the great epochs of human progress have been identified, more or less directly, with the enlargement of the sources of subsistence.'<sup>5</sup> He also hypothesized that technology, government, kinship, and property systems travel together up the evolutionary scale, and used the American Indians as evidence. Although he did not rely as heavily on verbal folklore as other evolutionists, he was one of the first to concentrate on material folk culture in *Houses and House Life of the American Aborigine* (1881). Morgan also influenced John Wesley Powell, whose staff at the Bureau of Ethnology conducted a great deal of folklore-related research and dominated the pages in the early days of the *Journal of American Folklore*. Although eventually rejected by American and most European cultural researchers, Morgan's ideas did find their most persisting adherents in the Soviet Union, led by the noted ethnographer Serge Tokarev.<sup>6</sup>

To be sure, evolutionists differed in their generic and regional concerns, but they generally shared a belief in a unilinear evolutionary model for the development of civilization from savagery. They adduced survivals and mental unity to support evolutionary theory, and they employed a comparative method to reconstruct origins of cultural phenomena. Their ideas enjoyed wide circulation from the last quarter of the nineteenth century through the early twentieth century, and found an especially pronounced presence in the pages of *Folk-Lore* until the diffusionists rivalled the evolutionists. Although the word 'survival' is anathema to folklorists today, many anthropologists have recently argued again for a modified evolutionary theory of culture in the wake of Leslie White's advocacy. And although folklorists today typically retain the comparative preoccupation in some of their research reports, the origin and development of folk materials are not as great concerns today for them as the materials' manifestation of human identities and interactions.

#### HISTORICAL APPROACHES

While the evolutionists interpreted cultural similarities as evidence of polygenesis or mental unity, other researchers thought that similarities could be explained by contact between cultures as a result of geographical or historical factors. Both schools shared a progressive notion of culture, but they differed in that the latter emphasized diffusion through contact, focused on the history of individual societies, and looked for origin from singular sources.

In Germany and Austria, a group of ethnologists including Fritz Graebner, Wilhelm Schmidt, and Wilhelm Koppers developed the concept of *Kulturkreise*, or 'culture clusters.' Their goal was to reconstruct the movement of cultures by determining clusters of cultural traits that moved together. They began by studying all available data on a small limited area. Then distribution maps were prepared based on traits, especially artifactual evidence, brought into an area by trade, war, travel, or geography. From such maps, traits that originally belonged together were derived on the basis of qualitative similarities and quantitative evidence. The researchers identified the resulting clusters as *Kulturkreise*. Historical data, they claimed, allowed for the determination of the *Kulturkreise's* chronological order, a method that labelled different *Kulturschichten*, or 'cultural strata.' Graebner's 'Die melanesische Bogenkultur und ihre verwandten,' for instance, discusses the spread of Melanesian bow culture outside Melanesia. Graebner summed up a basic premise of his method:

'It was not single dispersed elements, but a whole culture complex with its most characteristic traits which we have followed through all five continents.'<sup>7</sup>

Wilhelm Schmidt even delineated nine main early *Kulturkreise* affecting modern culture.<sup>8</sup> Component traits of the *Kreise* were chosen for similarities of form and quantity. If similarities appear in objects' forms that could not have occurred from natural use, a cultural connection was made. Second, if more traits appear in two societies than in others, greater cultural connections were assumed. The *Kulturkreislehre*, or 'culture cluster school,' thought that resulting clusters were relatively stable even as they diffused.

Criticisms of the *Kulturkreislehre* centred on the school's generalized composites of traits which give no indication of origin or variance, their failure to deal with historical accidents, local or individual developments, and social change.<sup>9</sup> Critics also objected to the school's over-reliance on museum artifacts removed from their original contexts, and acceptance of unrepresentative or exotic survivals.<sup>10</sup> Still, the school was instrumental in revealing advantages of studying individual societies and their material culture. And the *Kulturkreislehre* gave professional scholarly impetus to cultural researches, in contrast to the prevalent avocationalism of the evolutionists. Indeed, the folk atlas movement owes a debt to the precedent for historical-geographical mapping of artifacts set by the *Kulturkreislehre*.<sup>11</sup>

In America, Franz Boas, who was educated in Germany, challenged the fundamental assumptions of evolutionary thought, but he suggested methods and hypotheses distinct from the *Kulturkreislehre*. In 1896 he delivered an incisive paper on 'The Limitations of the Comparative Method of Anthropology' which outlined his major criticisms of cultural evolution: (1) Universal ideas are not identical but rather vary. Variance is caused by environmental and psychological conditions. (2) Ethnological phenomena cannot be compared because they develop differently in different cultures. (3) Survivals should not be the focus of research, but processes by which culture has developed should. (4) Similarities between different geographical areas are not satisfactory proof of a historical connection; rather, a continuity of distribution must be shown.<sup>12</sup> Instead of countering evolutionists with *a priori* assumptions and methods of his own, he called for historical studies of individual societies in conjunction with intensive field work to reveal processes of growth and to discover complex relations of societies. Boas used folkloric data such as myths, tales, arts, and speech in his attempt to fit such traditions in the context of particular cultures and to outline patterns of dissemination.

In his examination of North American Indian tales, Boas noted that myths are not organic growths but rather obtain their form through borrowing and adapting from foreign sources. He rejected the notion of myths' origin in explanations of natural phenomena; he insisted that the complexity of myths negates monistic explanation. Only individual myths can be interpreted, he claimed, and even their original idea is, 'at best, much obscured.'<sup>13</sup> His statement, 'the nearer the people, the greater the number of common elements,' in addition to factors of tribes' character, hostility, and location, reflects his support of continuities and differences in culture being explained by diffusion.

Boas differed from German historical approaches by focusing on individual cultures rather than specific traits, by viewing variance rather than stability resulting from diffusion, and by rejecting a progressive scheme for culture's development. He encouraged his students to undertake field research, atypical of the *Kulturkreislehre*, but he realized the further need for professionalism in anthropology effected by the

Germans, for he helped establish the academic discipline of anthropology in the United States. The researches of Boas's students like Melville Herskovits, Alfred L. Kroeber, Ruth Benedict, Ruth Bunzel, and Margaret Mead tested, expanded (or challenged), and taught his original ideas. One of those central ideas asserted that folklore is crucial to the anthropologist's purview, for folklore reflects culture. In fact, the *Journal of American Folklore* was edited for many years by Boas and his followers.

As Boas examined the diffusion of cultural phenomena among North American Indians, Melville Herskovits investigated American blacks and their relation to African roots. Like Boas, Herskovits wanted to crush racist notions of racial and ethnic inferiority attached to pre-existent studies of minority or exotic cultures. Herskovits's major work, *The Myth of the Negro Past* (1941), made a case for a vital Afro-American culture and denied that blacks lost their African Heritage upon their entrance into the New World. Herskovits confirmed the Boasian idea of variance in diffusion when he argued, 'Turning now to consider the different degrees to which differing elements in each of these cultures have responded to contact with non-African ways of life, we see that the carry-over of Africanisms is anything but uniform over individual cultures, being far greater in some aspects than in others.'<sup>14</sup> Unlike the *Kulturkreislehre* who did not allow for individual control of culture, Herskovits claimed that culture 'can be mastered by any individual without regard to race, or by any group that has the will and the opportunity to master it.'<sup>15</sup> He thus propounded concepts of *reinterpretation of retentions* in new settings, an answer to Boas's call for understanding enculturative processes.<sup>16</sup> And unlike W. E. B. DuBois's earlier sociological study of Afro-American houses and house life, Herskovits did not hypothesize a unilinear evolutionary development.<sup>17</sup> Boas and Herskovits's concern for cultural relativism and ethnocentrism was a reaction to a period of intolerance in American history, for the twenties and thirties marked an era of diplomatic isolation and interracial ostracism. Ideologically, then, Boas's work had a social message; it reminded people of the need to appreciate and understand cultures other than their own.

While Boas and Herskovits's writings reflected their preoccupation with interactive patterns of the individual in culture and their rejection of cultural and geographical determinism, another Boasian student, A. L. Kroeber, seemed to occupy a position antithetical to Boas's ideas. Kroeber de-emphasized the individual and argued that culture is a 'phenomenon of its own, behaving according to its own laws,' and thus the individual was merely an agent of cultural forces.<sup>18</sup> In answer to Boas's rejection of geographical determinism, Kroeber posited environmental possibilism, which meant that although environment did not determine culture, it set restrictions on the way culture developed—an idea shared by another prominent attendant of Boas, Clark Wissler.<sup>19</sup> Kroeber agreed, however, that cultural traits are integrated and that culture as a whole contains an inherent consistency. The essential question raised by Boas and Kroeber, 'Is culture a collective or individual product?' continued to be tackled by students of Boas. The search for its answer became especially significant in anthropological studies of personality and culture to be discussed shortly.

Of concern to this discussion is the relationship of the American school of historicalism and diffusion to folkloristic methods. A summary of Boasian premises might include the following: (1) histories of individual societies, (2) focus on diffusion of single traits, (3) understanding of culture change processes, (4) concern with variance in addition to similarities caused by diffusion, (5) rejection of absolute laws governing culture, (6) denial of cultural and geographical determinism, and (7) view of systemic nature of cultural components. Certainly Boas's stress on field research and

observation of individual societies has become a basic presupposition of folkloristics, although post-World War II folklorists tended to be literary in emphasis, rather than anthropological. With the resurgence of anthropological orientations in folkloristics recently, Boas's ideas have been given renewed citation and discussion. Lauri Honko's programme for cultural ecology, for example, is reminiscent of Boas's viewpoints, but Honko points out that the new folkloristic stand moves away from Boas's tendency to view culture atomistically.<sup>20</sup>

But what of the early historic-geographic folklore school? This school, represented by Finnish scholars like Kaarle Krohn and American adherents Stith Thompson and his student Warren Roberts, shared a belief in the explanatory powers of diffusion and a conviction to study particular traits before making general pattern statements. The historic-geographic folklorists were also concerned with variance and similarity caused by diffusion, but they tended to examine life histories of specific phenomena rather than societies. While Boas was studying roles of individuals in the enculturative process, the historic-geographic folklorist assumed the passivity of bearers. Another difference between the historicalism of Boas and the historic-geographic method lies in the purpose of study. Boas cautioned against searches for origins of specific traits as objects for study; the historic-geographic folklorists sought *ur-forms* as their goals of research. Although predominant in folkloristics for many years, the historic-geographic school came under early attack from Carl von Sydow; later, historic-geographic studies nearly vanished. Even Warren Roberts challenged diffusion as a sufficient explanation for the persistence of cultural phenomena when he actively studied material culture.<sup>21</sup>

In contrast to the literary historicalism of Thompson which diverged from Boas's historicalism, modern folkloristic studies of material culture more closely resemble the latter. Boas, as well as Herskovits and Bunzel, used artifacts in studies of diffusion and culture, but modern folkloristic studies have notably expanded the selection of objects for research to include non-primitive, vernacular artifacts. Henry Glassie's *Pattern in the Material Culture of the Eastern United States* relied on a cultural geography model, but shared a concern with historical examination of diffusion, processes of change, influence of culture contact, variance of traits, and integration of culture.<sup>22</sup> Glassie traced the spread of ideas and artifacts from three culture areas on the East Coast through the United States; he went beyond citing geographical influences to consider factors of economy, population, popular culture, and cognition. Recently two students of Glassie, John Vlach and Howard Marshall, presented 'A Folklife Approach to American Dialects,' which assumed the integrative nature of culture in order to correlate material culture with regional speech.<sup>23</sup>

A different approach which looks to Boas for points of departure is the germinal behaviouristic school.<sup>24</sup> Specifically, behaviouristic folklorists raise Boas's issue of the individual's role in culture and behaviour. Michael Owen Jones in his seminal *The Hand Made Object and Its Maker* used Boas's call for the study of the individual artist as his springboard for analysis of a chairmaker.<sup>25</sup> Further, Jones and Bronner have looked to Boas's conception of art as a 'perfection of form' for an organizing principle in behavioural studies of work, folk art, and technics; but they have questioned the role of historicalism in such studies.<sup>26</sup> And just as Boas introduced the scientific rigour of *Natur- and Gesichtswissenschaften* to anthropology, so too have folklorists sought a scientific structure to their inquiries.<sup>27</sup>

#### PSYCHOLOGICAL APPROACHES

Boas's questioning of individuals' psychological roles in culture appears in his

statement, 'The dynamics of social life can be understood only on the basis of the reaction of the individual to the culture in which he lives and of his influence upon society.'<sup>28</sup> This challenge egged many anthropologists to investigate the psychology of individuals in culture as manifested in their folklore. The psychological writings of Sigmund Freud and Clark Hull, who used folklore as evidence, fuelled the fire of inquiry into mental factors.

A student of Boas, Margaret Mead, penetratingly, if controversially, addressed the question of personality's relationship to culture. Her *Coming of Age in Samoa* (1928) psychologically examined adolescence among Samoans. Her study revealed an antithesis of the Euro-American stereotype of a stormy adolescence. She rejected the notion of biological determinism and instead hypothesized a biopsychological plasticity of human nature. She stressed, 'human nature is not rigid or unyielding,' a situation that allowed for cultural conditioning.<sup>29</sup> Her defence of psychological factors rather than biological causes continued in *Growing Up in New Guinea* (1939) and *Sex and Temperament in Primitive Societies* (1935).

Building upon the ideas of Edward Sapir and Margaret Mead, Ruth Benedict suggested that cultures could be described in terms of one or two psychological traits. In *Patterns of Culture*, Benedict outlined Apollonian—peaceful and conservative—characteristics for Zunis, and Dionysian—excited and extreme—features for the Kwakiutl. Through comparison of numerous institutions and beliefs, Benedict emphasized culture's consistency but hesitated to predict any global scheme. She used the idea of diffusion to explain similarities and differences among cultures by pointing out that cultures will select traits which are compatible with their own traditions and behaviours.<sup>30</sup> Rather than draw conclusions about personality types of an entire culture as Benedict did, however, Mead focused on specific aspects of cultures.

In 1936 Abram Kardiner organized a seminar at the New York Psychoanalytic Institute which featured leading personality and culture figures like Edward Sapir, Ruth Benedict, Ruth Bunzel, Ralph Linton and Cora DuBois. Kardiner proceeded past Mead's plasticity and Benedict's characteristic personalities by postulating the existence of 'basic personality structures' among members of a given society. Such personalities were formed by primary institutions dealing with disciplining, gratifying, and inhibiting children. Thus answers could be inferred for custom diversity among different cultures by determining their basic personality structures, that personality configuration which is shared by the bulk of the society's members as a result of the early experiences which they have in common.<sup>31</sup>

Cora DuBois tested Kardiner's ideas in Indonesia by applying psychological tests to individuals, thus generating ethnographic data rarely available until then. She altered Kardiner's basic personality structure to the concept of 'modal personality,' because she found behaviour varied according to highest-frequency tendencies.<sup>32</sup> But another anthropologist who tested the idea rejected the concept of modal personality; Anthony Wallace analyzed Iroquois personalities by using statistical data but found no quantitative confirmation of a modal personality, and he found no large differences between other societies with which he worked.<sup>33</sup> Still another researcher, C. W. M. Hart, found striking diversity between individual personalities in the same society. He concluded that if anthropologists expect to find 'stereotyped personalities in the simpler cultures, they are doomed to disappointment.'<sup>34</sup> Wallace suggested a move away from a search for uniformity among societies and instead toward identifying 'processes of the organization of diversity.'<sup>35</sup> By this concept he meant that psychological differences in a society are tremendous, but people are held together by



cognitive and behavioural processes that account for variance. Indeed, the 'organization of diversity' is a basic premise of the performance-centred and behaviouristic schools of folkloristics.

The questions raised by culture and personality researchers were anticipated by East European and Russian folklorists, who in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries investigated the relationship between creative personalities and their expressive behaviours.<sup>36</sup> And their studies influenced in turn the development of the performance-centred and behaviouristic folklorists. In the realm of culture and personality, folklorists have particularly contributed hypotheses on the psychological needs and demands for folkloric expression among individuals and groups.<sup>37</sup>

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In anthropology, as in other fields, Freud's ideas found fervid followers. Freud's use of folklore like jokes and myths inspired early psychological anthropologists such as Ernest Jones, Robert Marett, and Weston La Barre to give psychoanalytical interpretations of expressive behaviours. Criticisms of Freud's folkloristic interpretations have been numerous and varied, but today folklorist Alan Dundes has most forcefully argued for psychoanalytical interpretations of folklore and culture, such as football, the bullroarer, and the folktale source of *King Lear*.<sup>38</sup>

The seminal ideas of Watson and Jung also have their propounders, although fewer in number than Freud's. Applying the premises of Watson's behaviourism, folklorist Hasan El-Shamy analyzed Egyptian tale-telling.<sup>39</sup> But in the conviction that behaviour has underlying cognitive processes, Michael Owen Jones and Priscilla Denby have looked to C. G. Jung for explanations of folkloric symbolism.<sup>40</sup> Bronner, on the other hand, has invoked the sociopsychological theories of George Herbert Mead in his work.<sup>41</sup> Indeed, Jones, Bronner, and Georges have been instrumental in stressing the need for sociopsychological inquiry into folklore and material culture as they plied 'behaviouristic' perspectives distinct from the psychological approaches of Watson and Freud.

Although older folklife approaches tended to overstate external explanations like the environment and social structure, it was Erixon who made a call for examining internal, psychological explanations. In fact, Erixon thought that the study of the *physical and mental elements of the individual* would compose the conceptual strength of folklife research. He stated that the study of the individual is 'a study of how a society is reflected in and influences his existence, and of how the culture components transmitted to him are applied, digested, and able to characterize him, both in his own person and in relation to his family.'<sup>42</sup> The irony here is that the folklife research orientation that emerged from his programme of regional ethnology played down psychological interpretations of individuals in favour of object-orientated studies of abstracted, historic peasant groups. In contrast, newer folklife approaches typically include sociopsychological and physiocultural dimensions in their action-orientated studies of persons with varying identities, not just a social or regional one, and with unique values, aspirations, abilities, and needs.<sup>43</sup> As Jones dramatically points out, tradition 'is the ideas communicated from one individual to another which serve to

establish precedence for the procedure; what the individual does with the ideas and the skills that have been revealed to him is his concern.<sup>44</sup> Thus he and others seek insights into the dynamic, complex character of particular creative individuals and their expressive behaviours.

As modern researchers increasingly feel dissatisfied with simplistic, external explanations, they look to deeper meanings in the realm of mind and behaviour. Instructive to this sentiment of the times are the conceptual foundations set by the culture and personality school, the Freudians, the structural-linguistic analysts, and the American pragmatists. The pages of *Ethos: Journal of the Society for Psychological Anthropology* and *Western Folklore* portend further reflections on cognitive-behavioural meaning as researchers look back to early psychological approaches in anthropology and folkloristics for lessons and comparisons.

### FUNCTIONALISM

Just as Boas developed many of his ideas in reaction to the cultural evolutionists, Bronislaw Malinowski articulated the concept of functionalism in response to the theories of Tylor, Frazer, and the *Kulturkreislehre*. Although Malinowski was deeply influenced by Frazer, his extended contact with Trobriand Islanders led him to reject totemism as an explanation for primitive customs. Instead, he saw customs as 'a blend of utilitarian anxiety about the most necessary objects of his surroundings, with some preoccupation in those which strike his imagination and attract his attention.'<sup>45</sup> What he wanted to know was what part such customs played in the maintenance and development of culture.

Malinowski examined the practice of *Kula* exchanges in south-east New Guinea and came up with the idea of an equilibrium model of culture, society as an integrated, homeostatic unit. By pointing out that *Kula* exchanges form a system of mutual interrelationships in an area known for exclusiveness and war, he posited that a function of an institution, or organized system of activity, is the part it plays within the interrelated whole in fulfilling universal human needs. He divided needs into three categories: primary or biological such as procreation, nutrition, or protection; (2) derived or instrumental such as economic or educational; and (3) integrative or synthetic such as magic, religion, play, and art. Magic, he argues, is a reaction to man's knowledge of his impotence. 'His anxiety, his fears and hopes, induce a tension in his organism which drives him to some sort of activity.'<sup>46</sup> Thus every cultural element rested on some individual need. The task of the anthropologist, according to Malinowski, was to undertake a synchronic depth study of a society to determine the functions of its elements.

Often overlooked in Malinowski's programme is his argument for the primacy of material culture in the anthropologist's purview. 'Culture,' he said, 'is nothing but the organized behaviour of man. Man differs from the animals in that he has to rely on an artificially fashioned environment: on implements, weapons, dwellings, and man-made means of transport.'<sup>47</sup> Malinowski anticipated resistance to his claim for the priority of material culture when he referred to the irritation and scorn his colleagues displayed faced with his interest in details of construction and manual procedures in the ethnography of the Trobriand Islands.<sup>48</sup> He attempted to convince his audience of the high value of objects as cultural evidence by showing that to produce and to manage the material world, human beings require knowledge and techniques shared among members of a social group. By understanding the material world, then, the ethnographer can understand the spiritual and social world of the group, and thus gain

insight into the 'large-scale moulding matrix,' the 'gigantic conditioning apparatus,' which he called culture.<sup>49</sup>

Criticisms of functionalism have centred on its explanation of the existence of cultural elements by a causal need, and on the assumption that society is an integrated, systemic whole. Edmund Leach, for example, criticized the integrated unity idea by showing that any social system contains opposing factions. Using the example of myth, he found that different myths validate rights of different groups of people within the same society. He concluded that myth is a 'language of argument, not a chorus of harmony.'<sup>50</sup> In addition, strict functionalism is of limited use in the modern world, for the ideal closed society in equilibrium rarely, if at all, exists. Function has a more expedient connotation in modern settings, for expressive behaviour is more dependent on exigencies of context and personality—the situation, moment, and human factor present.

Elliott Oring attacked traditional functionalism for attempting to explain origin. While he accepted functional explanation for the existence of folklore as a sociocultural phenomenon, he insisted that origins must be found in historical antecedents. He stated that the unintended effects of a phenomenon cannot account for the origin of the phenomenon itself.<sup>51</sup> In addition, utilities and functions that allegedly generate effects may be fallaciously generalized to cause all instances where certain conditions are present. Functional elements, in reality, vary to each specific situation and individual in the world of experience, although a degree of continuity may exist.

Oring hurled his sharpest barbs at William Bascom's famous four functions of folklore. Based on Malinowski's principles, Bascom enumerated escape, validation, education, and social control as basic functions of folklore which serve to maintain the stability of culture. Oring questioned the causal and logical connections of functions to the phenomena they supposedly describe. Further, Bascom's equilibrium model may be misleadingly imposed on abstracted groups or communities, although such societies often tend to be open, dynamic systems prone to extreme variation.

Despite such pointed criticisms, functionalism pervades folkloristic and anthropological writing. Frank Hoffman, for instance, explained the persistence of Anglo-American erotica by positing the integral functions such material played within the culture.<sup>52</sup> Evon Z. Vogt's 'Water Witching: An Interpretation of a Ritual Pattern in a Rural American Community' proposed that water witching constituted a ritual response to situations of technological uncertainty: 'The certain answers provided by the dowser relieve the farmer's anxiety about ground water resources and inspire confidence to go ahead with the hard work of developing farms.'<sup>53</sup> But while most psychological approaches would assay motivation and meaning from the individual's standpoint, functionalism deduces such information from the culture. Mullen attempted to incorporate Wallace's psychological approach with Malinowski's in his study of fishermen's beliefs along the Texas Gulf Coast.<sup>54</sup> He concluded that risk situations affected magical beliefs; as the risk of danger increased, he noted an increase in the quantity of magical beliefs surrounding a fishing situation. But again, we must ask, did risk cause the rise of beliefs or did beliefs perhaps engender the risk? Indeed, the issues of causation and the abstraction of an equilibrium model pose problems in the application of Malinowski's methodology, although most folklorists do embrace with less difficulty his idea of 'context'—studying phenomena *in situ* and taking note of the affecting powers of the setting.

Rather than eliminate functions from analytical consideration, Oring suggested that positing folklore's function in a society is significant as long as it is not presented as an

explanation for folklore's germination. Towards this end, Oring countered Abrahams and Dundes's anxiety-reducing functional explanation of the elephant joke with his own structural-contextual view of humour.<sup>55</sup> Yet more than any other concept, 'function' recurs perhaps most often in folklore textbooks. To be sure, folklorists have significantly modified the analysis of function to be a more open concept, but whether functionalism can continue in theory as more than a ramification of description appears doubtful. As Arensberg and Bronner point out, researchers increasingly look to internal interactional, structural, and motivational factors of cognition and behaviour for explanations.<sup>56</sup>

In some contrast to Malinowski, A. R. Radcliffe-Brown (who disagreed with Boas's position that a search for laws governing society was futile) championed a different brand of functionalism. Radcliffe-Brown's ideas derived their inspiration from the work of Emile Durkheim. In an early study of Australian aborigines Durkheim analyzed worship of a totem god as a reinforcement of the society's identity and continuity.<sup>57</sup> Function, for Durkheim, revolved around the role of social solidarity in shaping a culture. Studies of this abstraction, social structure, typically examined political and kinship ties, and viewed such structure in organismic terms. Durkheim and Radcliffe-Brown were not as concerned with a concept of culture as they were with the integrative relationships within a social order. Because of this orientation, they de-emphasized biopsychological needs and emphasized instead the social functions of status and cohesion operating in an integrative social whole.

In his study of Andamanese customs and beliefs, Radcliffe-Brown denied Tylor's and Muller's view of myths arising out of native explanations of natural phenomena. The Andaman Islander, he asserted, 'has no interest in nature save in so far it directly affects the social life.'<sup>58</sup> Radcliffe-Brown's concept of social order as being governed by natural laws appears in his argument that Andamanese legends gave accounts of how the order of the world came into existence: 'The Andaman Islander finds himself in an ordered world, a world subject to law, controlled by unseen forces.'<sup>59</sup> Radcliffe-Brown thus assumed a natural uniformity of society and an inherent integration of societal elements into a structural whole. He posits a causal relationship when he states, 'These customs are simply means by which certain ways of feeling about the different aspects of social life are regularly expressed, and through expression, kept alive and passed on from one generation to another.'<sup>60</sup>

Other structural-functionalists carried this causal relationship further. Meyer Fortes in his study of the Tallensi in West Africa claimed that 'The Tallensi have an ancestor cult not because they fear the dead—for they do not—or believe in the immortality of the soul—for they have no such notion—but because their social structure *demands it*.'<sup>61</sup> His attempt to explain the mediation of the conflict between parent and child through ancestor worship seemed to assume that the social structure determined the culture rather than vice versa.

Critics claimed that the assumption of social structure's primacy precluded significant data about other cultural elements. In addition, critics denied the validity of the biological, organismic model upon which Radcliffe-Brown built his principles of structural-functional analysis. Another questionable tenet was the invisibility of the social organism in comparison with the visible biological organism. Thus Marvin Harris argued that social structures are created abstractions. Harris turned Radcliffe-Brown's own analogy around when he warned, 'It is as if in attempting to discover the functions of the spinal columns of amphibia, we ran the risk of examining a series of headless frogs.'<sup>62</sup>

Folklorists have tended to shy away from structural-functional approaches, partly as a result of their usual omission of kinship and political systems from their scope. Recently, however, Henry Glassie raised the structural-functionalist point in his study of Christmas mumming traditions in an Irish village. In *All Silver and No Brass* he acknowledged that functionalism is out of vogue, but defended his view that 'mumming functioned to hold a fragmented community together.'<sup>63</sup> He asserted that mumming reflected a period when 'community was still a concern of its members,' and attributed the demise of mumming and the community to changing social needs of younger generations.<sup>64</sup> Glassie is open to the criticism of fallaciously establishing causal relationships between social-structural function and custom, but he strengthened his case by presenting informants' confirmation of social functions served by mumming. The reader discovers, however, that Glassie 'explained' functionalism to his informants; was his analysis then based on their acquiescence or conviction? And generally, does functionalism as a research strategy unduly limit and presuppose the answer to the investigator's research question?

Modifications of structural-functionalism have resulted from testing folklore transmission and its manifestation of social networks. 'Networks' replace the more ambiguous concept of social order. A strong voice for a folkloristic perspective on structural-functionalism belongs to Gary Alan Fine, whose studies have concentrated on relatively small groups. He asserted, 'A realization of the importance of social structures—both formal and voluntary—can help to explain the patterns affecting folklore diffusion and textual variation.'<sup>65</sup> Reactions to his statements reflect folkloristic thought in the light of anthropological criticism. Dundes complained that Fine's arbitrary choice of a 'society' did not necessarily constitute an integrated whole, a comment that reflects Marvin Harris's remarks addressed to Radcliffe-Brown. Eleanor Ott argued that folklore could not be quantified and absolute laws concerning its nature did not apply, a remark that echoes Franz Boas. Linda Dégh negated Fine's assumption of social structure as causal and called for the primacy of psychological rather than sociological evidence, an opinion shared by Elliott Oring in his 'Three Functions of Folklore.'<sup>66</sup> In material culture study, another contrast exists between the structural-functional approach of anthropologist Nelson H. H. Graburn and other contributors in *Ethnic and Tourist Arts* and the denial of social equilibrium models in the folkloristic work of Jones.<sup>67</sup> Although Jones, Bauman, and others recognize structures of everyday interactions, they deny the existence of a superorganic social structure and instead call for the investigation of continuities and consistencies in interactive behaviours.

#### CODA

This brief survey is not meant to be comprehensive by any means; rather it demonstrates the convergence and divergence of folkloristic relations with the early movements of anthropology. My intent is straightforward. In recollecting past trends of cultural research I seek to illuminate the analytical penumbra between anthropology and folkloristics. Such retrospect allows us to recognize and evaluate the conditions and ideas that affected the guiding doyens of the fields. It provides us with a sense of place in the broad realm of scholarship, so that we can identify and analyze points of departure. As our disciplines mature and interdisciplinary branches like material culture and area studies arise, reflective retrospections become indispensable aids to explicate the intellectual legacy we inherit and to define who we are, why we do what we do, and where we should go from here. In anthropology, books by Harris, Lowie,

and Tokarev, to name a few, have been instrumental in accomplishing these tasks; similarly folkloristics boasts the histories of Dorson, McNeil, Cocchiara, and Dwyer-Schick.<sup>68</sup> Fewer sweeping chroniclers of the folklife movement have stepped forward, but Yoder, Erixon, and Fenton have offered rudimentary essays.<sup>69</sup> Using the precedents of Bronner, Yoder, Marshall, and Fenton, Thomas Schlereth has tackled the difficult yet crucial task of writing an intellectual history of the American material culture movement.<sup>70</sup> The varied disciplinary character of cultural research creates a need among analysts for more chronicles of *transdisciplinary* relations. To be sure, articles exist on historical examinations of folklore and history, folklore and psychology, folklore and geography, and so on, but I have in mind conceptual and philosophical analyses of the movements and figures in such relations, analyses our bookshelves currently lack.<sup>71</sup>

The intertwining intellectual strands of folklore and anthropology are especially rewarding to untangle and examine, for they reveal fundamental concepts of the individual, his expressions, society and culture—concepts we continually must reassess as we add new research and methods to our armamentarium. Alliances between folkloristic and anthropological approaches will not remove the independence of the disciplines, despite fears to the contrary. Folkloristics and anthropology are each ‘organizations of diversity’ composed of multidisciplinary and multifunctional contributions, yet seen as a whole they assume distinctive shapes. Each discipline possesses its own history, its particular power base, and separate ways of viewing and doing things. Hence many anthropologists look to folkloristics for more humanistic perspectives, and folklorists often turn to anthropology for the rigour and precision of the social sciences. Such turns are relative to the Archimedean ‘where to stand’ individual researchers choose, and thus are often matters of degree, rather than kind. And as humans studying other humans we benefit from looking retrospectively and introspectively within and beyond our disciplinary homes when we chart our separate, yet often overlapping, investigative and analytical paths.

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